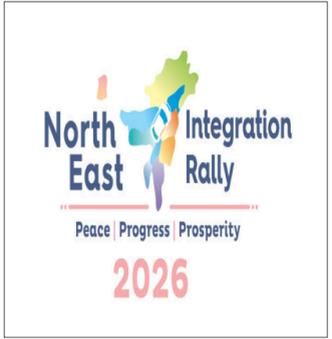




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STAY-ENRICHED



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PERSPECTIVE

“Never speak out of anger, Never act out of fear, Never choose from impatience, But wait... and peace will appear.”
—Guy Finley

SC to hear journalist’s plea against Assam Police case on Aug 28

GUWAHATI

The Supreme Court is set to take up on August 28 a petition by journalist Abhisar Sharma, who has sought the quashing of an FIR filed by Assam Police over a video post critical of the state’s policies. A bench of Justices MM Sundresh and N Kottiswar Singh will hear Sharma’s plea, moved through advocate Sumeer Sodhi. The case carries wider implications as the petition also questions the constitutional validity of Section 152 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), a provision dealing with acts seen as endangering the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India.

The FIR, lodged at the Guwahati Crime Branch police station, stems from a complaint by Alok Baruah, who alleged that Sharma’s YouTube video uploaded on August 8 could trigger communal tension and erode trust in state institutions.

In the video, Sharma reportedly referred to observations made by the Gauhati High Court over the allotment of 3,000 bighas of land in Dima Hasao district to a private company for setting up a cement plant.

Sharma has been booked under multiple BNS provisions, including Section 152 and Section 196, which deals with promoting enmity between groups.

WHO SAID WHAT



A new chapter begins in the ‘Make in India’ journey as electric vehicles made here will now be exported to over 100 countries. ~ Narendra Modi, PM

Terror Threat Looms Over Assam Amid Bangladesh Unrest, Say Security Agencies

GUWAHATI

Security agencies in Assam and neighboring northeastern states have grown increasingly concerned over the rising influence of radical groups in Bangladesh and the possible spillover effects in the region.

According to a report by The Assam Tribune, intelligence sources believe that jihadi outfits may exploit Assam’s ongoing eviction drives to radicalize youth from a particular community.

Citing senior police officials, the report notes that Bangladesh-based outfit Jamaat-e-Islami has gained significant strength, raising alarms in Assam’s security circles.

Intelligence agencies have also flagged Pakistan’s renewed diplomatic and intelligence-level outreach to Bangladesh as a potential red flag.

Notably, Pakistan’s Foreign Minister and the head of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) both visited Bangladesh recently, marking a shift in regional dynamics.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that Bangladesh is currently governed by a caretaker



administration. Sources said that this interim government ideally should not make long-term strategic decisions.

Yet, it has permitted China to upgrade a World War II-era airstrip at Rongpur, just 25 km from the India-Bangladesh border, into a fully operational airport.

Security analysts view this development as a potential threat to India’s vulnerable Siliguri Corridor, also known as the “Chicken Neck,” which links the Northeast to the rest of the country.

Police in Assam and central agencies have already arrested approx-

imately 60 operatives linked to the Ansar Bangla Team (ABT), a known extremist group.

The previous Bangladeshi regime had cracked down on such outfits, but sources claim that the current caretaker government has taken a softer stance.

One ABT leader, Jeshimuddin Rahmani, reportedly walked free, while another, Abdullah Talah, escaped from custody, both of whom are likely to attempt regrouping efforts.

Security agencies are particularly wary of the possibility that extremist groups could capitalize on communal tensions sparked by recent eviction drives in Assam.

“They will definitely try to brainwash local youths,” a senior source said, according to The Assam Tribune, adding that police are intensifying surveillance, especially across social media platforms.

However, intelligence gathering remains a challenge. “In most cases, jihadi elements operate covertly to indoctrinate youths, and without actionable intelligence, it’s extremely difficult to intercept them in time,” officials admitted.

Amit Shah to kickstart Assam Assembly polls with ‘war bugle’ on Aug 29



GUWAHATI

The ‘Panchayat Sanmilitan’ scheduled for August 29, in presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, will mark the sounding of the ‘war bugle’ for the 2026 Assembly elections in Assam, BJP general secretary Pallab Lochan Das announced on August 26.

Addressing a press conference in Guwahati, Das said that the convention will be attended by the top leadership of the NDA, including the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), Rabha Hasong Joutha Sangram Samiti and Janashakti Party.

“The convention is expected to see the participation of nearly 20,000 elected representatives, in-

cluding 16,671 panchayat representatives from the BJP and over 1,500 representatives from the AGP,” he added. In addition, elected representatives from all autonomous councils, including the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council and Dima Hasao Autonomous Council, will also be present. However, keeping in view the forthcoming BTC elections, no representatives from the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) will participate, Das clarified.

On August 29, the Union home minister will attend two government programmes and one political event in Guwahati during his day-long tour. Prior to the ‘Panchayat Convention’ at 11 am, Shah will inaugurate the newly constructed building of Raj Bhavan.

Following the ‘sanmilitan’ at Veterinary College Playground in Khanapara, he will also inaugurate the year-long birth centenary celebrations of Assam’s first non-Congress Chief Minister Gopal Borbora.

New Criminal Law Helps Assam Police Push Charge-Sheet Rate to 93%: DGP



GUWAHATI

Assam Police has reported a sharp improvement in charge-sheet filing and conviction rates since the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) came into effect last year.

Director General of Police Harmeet Singh said 93 per cent of BNS cases registered in July 2025 had charge-sheets filed, compared to 84.42 per cent in May. The BNS replaced the Indian Penal Code in July 2024, marking a major shift in the country’s criminal justice system. Convictions have also seen a

significant rise. The DGP noted that the conviction rate, which stood at just 5.5 per cent in 2020, has reached 26.72 per cent this year. Alongside, pending investigations have dropped steeply — from 1,54,280 cases in 2020 to 12,338 cases by July 2025.

Singh, after a state crime review meeting on August 25, highlighted the improvements in an update on social media platform X, crediting the progress to Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma’s guidance and police reforms aimed at faster investigations and stronger prosecutions.

SC Directs New Forensic Scrutiny of Audio Attributed to Former Manipur CM

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday (August 25) directed the National Forensic Science Laboratory (NFSL) in Gandhinagar to conduct a fresh examination of audio recordings that allegedly feature former Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh in connection with the state’s ethnic violence.

The Court took this step after observing that an earlier report from the Guwahati Forensic Science Laboratory failed to clearly confirm whether the voice on the recordings matched Singh’s.

A bench comprising Justices P.V. Sanjay Kumar and Aravind Kumar heard the case, which stemmed from a petition filed by the Kukli Organisation for Human Rights Trust. The petitioner had sought an independent investigation into the audio tapes, which have raised serious allegations. The judges noted that although the Guwahati lab had compared the disputed recordings with an admitted voice sample, it had not provided a definitive conclusion.

To address this gap, the



Court instructed the NFSL to verify two key points: whether the audio had been edited or tampered with, and whether the voice in all the clips belonged to the same person.

The Court ordered authorities to send the audio clips, the voice sample, and a related questionnaire to the NFSL within one week. It also asked the lab to complete the analysis and submit a report in a sealed cover to the Court within six weeks. The Union government will bear the cost of the forensic examination. The Court scheduled the next hearing for November 3, 2025.

This directive follows a series of developments. In February, the Court had first requested a forensic report on the recordings. In May, the court also expressed dissatisfaction with the analysis provided and demanded a new one. On August 4, the bench criticized the delay, emphasizing that forensic evaluations should not be indefinite.

During earlier hearings, Advocate Prashant Bhushan, representing the petitioner, informed the Court that Truth Labs, a private forensic institute, had already deemed the audio authentic.

Impasse in Centre–Naga Talks Sparks Blockade Concerns



IMPHAL

The much anticipated talks between Government of India representatives and Naga organisations led by the United Naga Council (UNC) on the issues of Free Movement Regime (FMR) and border fencing ended in a deadlock today. The UNC leaders said that they would announce the date and mode of an agitation in protest against the development soon.

The 11-member Naga team held talks with an eight-member Central team for about two hours, a UNC source stated.

The UNC leaders told this news agency over phone this evening that despite the long meeting, the two parties could not reach any consensus. The Central Government delegation was led by AK Mishra, Adviser (North East), Ministry of Home Affairs. Officials from the Intelligence Bureau and Border Management were part of the talks, the sources

THE UNC LEADERS told this news agency over phone this evening that despite the long meeting, the two parties could not reach any consensus. The Central Government delegation was led by AK Mishra, Adviser (North East), Ministry of Home Affairs. Officials from the Intelligence Bureau and Border Management were part of the talks, the sources said.

According to the UNC leaders, they told the Centre’s representatives that the ongoing border fencing construction should be kept on hold if the dialogue was to continue. “But the Government of India representatives said that the border fencing works cannot be stopped,” a UNC leader said.

The Centre’s representatives cited national security, smuggling, and influx of illegal immigrants as reasons for undertaking the border fencing works, said the UNC leaders

The Naga leaders will re-turn to Senapati tomorrow and convene a meeting before announcing the date and mode of the proposed agitation. Sources said that an indefinite economic blockade on the national highways was likely to be called. The present executive members of the UNC and three former UNC presidents (members of UNC Working Committee), leaders of Naga Women Union and All Naga Students’ As-sociation, Manipur (ANSAM), comprised the Naga team for the talks. They had gone to the national capital on the invitation of the Government of India.

The UNC had served a 20-day ultimatum to the Government on July 22, that had lapsed on August 11.

On August 11, the “emergency presidential council meeting” of the UNC held in Senapati and attended by presidents of the Naga hohos, had resolved to announce the mode of an agitation and future modus operandi within 15 days. The meeting was held on the issue of the abrogation of the FMR and the ongoing border fencing construction in the “Naga ancestral homeland”

Centre allocates over Rs 44 crore to Tripura, Mizoram under Finance Commission grants



NEW DELHI

The Union government has released the Fifteenth Finance Commission (XV FC) Untied Grants for Rural Local Bodies in Mizoram and Tripura for the financial year 2025-26.

According to reports, Mizoram has received Rs 14.2761 crore for 827 eligible village councils as part of the 2023-24 grants, while Tripura has been allocated Rs 29.75 crore for 606 eligible Gram Panchayats, 35 Block Panchayats, 8 Zilla Parishads, along with all 587 Village Committees and 40 Block Advisory Committees of

the state, as part of the first installment of Untied Grants for the financial year 2025-26.

“Government of India through Ministry of Panchayati Raj and Ministry of Jal Shakti recommends release of XV-FC Grants to States for Rural Local Bodies (RLBs) / Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). These allocated grants are recommended and released in 2 installments in a financial year”, the statement reads.

The Untied Grants will be utilized by RLBs/ PRIs for location-specific felt needs, under the Twenty-Nine (29) Subjects enshrined in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution, except for salaries and other establishment costs.

“While the Tied Grants can be used for the basic services of (a) sanitation and maintenance of ODF status, and this should include management and treatment of household waste, and human excreta and fecal sludge management in particular and (b) supply of drinking water, rainwater harvesting and water recycling”, it added.



VOLUME:1, ISSUE 559

OF POLITICS, POLEMICS AND POWER BATTLES

Politics in Bihar has once again turned into a boiling cauldron, an arena where ballots and barbs collide with ferocity. What should have been a basic bureaucratic exercise of revising electoral rolls, has instead metamorphosed into a logomachies of politics, polemics, and power, a rhetorical duel where every word has become a weapon, every accusation a salvo, and every rebuttal a counter-strike in the struggle for electoral dominance.

On the one side stand opposition, hurling thunderous charges of "vote chori" (vote theft) portraying the exercise as nothing less than a sacrilegious assault on Bharat Mata. On the other side, the Election Commission and ruling party retaliate with equal force, branding these allegations as manufactured hysteria designed to tarnish democratic institutions. In this theatre of democracy, press briefings, affidavits and social media videos have transformed into ammunition that shows no sign of abating.

The polemics have reached a boiling point. Escalating his fusillade against the Election Commission, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi recently thundered a dire warning, declaring that stern and unforgiving action awaits the Chief Election Commissioner and his colleagues when the INDIA bloc ascends to power. His words rattled the guardians of the electoral machinery, who fear that their credibility built over decades, is being undermined in the public mind. For the Election Commission and the ruling BJP-NDA combine, the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) is a constitutional exercise designed to cleanse voter lists and restore electoral integrity. For the opposition, however, it is nothing short of a political weapon, engineered to disenfranchise the vulnerable, tilt the scales, and entrench the incumbents. The Congress-RJD bloc, backed by INDIA alliance partners, has positioned itself firmly against the SIR. Their accusation: the revision, initiated just months before the Bihar Assembly elections, is less about cleansing rolls and more about strategic excision, targeting Muslims, Dalits, and migrant workers, groups that form the backbone of opposition support. To them, the timing is proof of conspiracy; the intent, they argue, is nakedly partisan. Rahul Gandhi has spearheaded the campaign with his rhetoric. Branding the exercise a conspiracy to "steal" elections, he coined the phrase "Vote Chori" as his political battle cry. He warned that Bihar could witness an "NRC-like situation."

Gandhi highlighted stories of alleged disenfranchisement as 100% proof of fraud, such as Ranju Devi, who initially claimed her family's names had vanished from the rolls. However, the Election Commission countered by releasing a video where she admitted her family's names were intact and that she had been misled by political operatives. This dented the opposition narrative. For the ruling NDA, this episode was termed as opposition's strategy to manufactured victimhood lacking credible evidence. In yet another fiery intervention, Gandhi released a video featuring Subodh Kumar, claiming his name was deleted from the rolls and declared it proof of "vote theft" and an assault on Bharat Mata. The Election Commission retaliated swiftly, revealing that Kumar was not an ordinary voter but an RJD Booth Level Agent whose name never existed in the rolls. With deletion lists corroborated by Supreme Court guidelines, the Commission dismissed the episode as a manufactured farce, pointing out that Kumar had never filed the requisite Form-6 or objections. On August 19, psephologist Sanjay Kumar, affiliated with Lokniti-CSDS, publicly apologized for his posts on the Maharashtra elections. He had claimed two assembly constituencies saw a sharp voter decline compared to the recent Lok Sabha polls, sparking debate and raising concerns about electoral integrity.

Later, Kumar admitted his interpretation was flawed, based on misleading official data, and clarified he never intended to mislead or question the Election Commission. For the Election Commission, the apology reinforced its stance that allegations of irregularities put forth before the public are out of hasty or erroneous analysis. Legally, the Election Commission stands on firm ground. Invoking Article 324 of the Constitution and Section 21 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, it insists it has both mandate and duty to revise rolls. Its objective, it asserts, is "purification," weeding out deceased, migrated, or duplicate entries to uphold the principle of one person, one vote.

The Commission emphasized that the 65 lakh deletions were the product of cross-verification, not arbitrariness, and that the process included multi-layered checks, including scrutiny by polling agents from all parties. However, the Supreme Court's intervention, directed the Commission to publish, district-wise, the names of all 65 lakh deleted voters along with explicit reasons for their removal. In the unprecedented press briefing, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar demanded Gandhi's sworn affidavit substantiating his allegations within seven days, which ends on this Sunday, or apologize to the nation. The ruling BJP and its allies have launched a counter-offensive too. Leaders like Tarun Chugh and Ajay Alok have gone further, accusing Gandhi of undermining institutions for petty mileage and even hinting at foreign influence. For the NDA, the opposition's campaign is not about democracy's defense but about delegitimizing the system itself.

Opposition leaders fear that millions who work outside the state, yet remain registered in their native villages, could lose their votes under the Commission's strict insistence on "ordinary residence." Since migrants are a crucial base for RJD-Congress, their exclusion could dramatically reshape Bihar's electoral landscape. The ruling alliance, however, argues this is essential to prevent double voting and ensure territorial accuracy.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"If you are not in danger, do not fight."

- says Sun-tzu

R. SURYAMURTHY

India today finds itself confronting a dilemma as old as statecraft itself: when forced to choose between two unpalatable options, which poison does one swallow? In 2025, that question has sharpened into a binary that policymakers in New Delhi cannot evade. On one side stands Washington, long cultivated as a strategic partner but now wielding tariffs as a blunt weapon. On the other side looms Beijing, India's largest trading partner and most intractable geopolitical adversary, suddenly presenting itself as a pragmatic collaborator against American economic coercion.

This is the classic "devil and the deep sea" predicament—except the waters are far more treacherous than ever.

The imposition of a 50 percent tariff on Indian exports by Washington in 2025 has jolted the foundations of the economic compact that underpinned the U.S.-India relationship. The justification offered—that India's purchase of discounted Russian oil undermines sanctions regimes—has not softened the blow. For New Delhi, the tariff is not merely commercial punishment; it is a breach of trust.

For decades, the United States has courted India as a counterweight to China's rise, celebrating shared democratic values and promising deep economic integration. Yet the reality of punitive tariffs, harsher than those applied to many U.S. adversaries, suggests that India's "special" place in Washington's worldview is conditional at best. Worse still, the tariff shock has been accompanied by a 90-day truce with Beijing, granting China breathing room while India is squeezed. The symbolism is stark: an ally is punished, a rival indulged.

This inversion has fuelled the sense in New Delhi that strategic partnership with the United States remains transactional. The language of "shared values" collapses when one partner is treated as expendable. For India, the humiliation lies not only in the tariff but in the contrast—it was singled out while Beijing was spared.

Into this breach steps China, fully aware of India's vulnerabilities. In 2023-24, bilateral trade reached \$136.2 billion, with a staggering \$101 billion deficit in Beijing's favour. India imports the lifeblood of its economy—over two-thirds of pharmaceutical ingredients, a majority of solar equipment, and more than a third of electronics—from its northern neighbour. This asymmetry is no accident; it reflects both India's dependence and China's leverage.

Yet at the very moment Washington turned the screws, Beijing softened its posture. Restrictions on urea exports were lifted, ensuring steady fertilizer supplies. Border trade routes that had been frozen for years reopened. Direct flights, suspended since the pandemic and the border clash, are set to resume. Even visas for pilgrims and tourists have been reinstated. Perhaps most significantly, partial troop withdrawals along disputed Himalayan stretches have reduced tensions and created political space for dialogue.

The choreography is deliberate. Beijing wishes to present itself not as an enemy but as an indispensable partner—one that can offer practical relief when Washington cannot. The implicit message is unmistakable: when the United States treats you like a liability, China can treat you like an asset.

For India, the immediate utility of this thaw is undeniable. The tariff shock has come at a time when global demand is



sluggish and exports already strained. A smoother flow of Chinese inputs—batteries, chemicals, machinery—offers relief for India's manufacturing ambitions, especially in sectors backed by government incentives such as electronics and renewable energy.

But here lies the trap. Every step closer to Beijing deepens structural dependency. This is not simply about a trade deficit measured in billions; it is about strategic vulnerability. India's pharmaceutical industry, touted as a global powerhouse, would falter without Chinese inputs. Its renewable energy push, marketed as a route to energy independence, relies on Chinese solar cells. Even its consumer electronics boom is tethered to supply chains controlled across the border.

In any future crisis—whether a border flare-up in Ladakh or a naval standoff in the Indian Ocean—Beijing would hold the ability to choke India's economy overnight by turning off the tap. This is dependency masquerading as pragmatism. And the political trust deficit is as wide as ever: Beijing continues to arm Pakistan, probe Indian cyberspace, and stall any resolution of the border dispute. To mistake tactical gestures for a strategic transformation is to risk national security.

If Beijing's smile is calculated, Washington's blindness is self-inflicted. By resorting to tariffs as a blunt instrument, the U.S. administration has ignored both the symbolic weight of such actions and the long-term costs of coercion. Fixated on short-term trade concessions—whether in agriculture, dairy, or market access—Washington has underestimated how deeply punitive measures cut into strategic trust.

The irony is cruel. By cornering India, Washington risks producing precisely the outcome it most fears: New Delhi edging closer to Beijing. On social media and in policy circles, the irony is not lost—tariffs meant to discipline India may instead accelerate its alignment with BRICS, the SCO, and other platforms that dilute American influence.

Washington's repeated assurances of India's "centrality" in the Indo-Pacific ring hollow when its policies push New Delhi into Beijing's arms. For India, the lesson is sobering: even the strongest partnerships can be sacrificed at the altar of domestic politics and transactional gains.

Complicating this binary is a third actor—Russia. The tariff dispute itself is rooted in India's oil purchases from Moscow. Energy security, discounted crude, and dec-

ades of defense cooperation tie New Delhi to Moscow in ways neither Washington nor Beijing can easily replicate.

Sensing opportunity, Moscow has already begun hinting at reviving the trilateral format involving Russia, India, and China. Such a framework, dormant for years, could suddenly acquire relevance as India looks for breathing space between great power pressures. Yet such moves would only deepen the triangle of entanglements: Washington's coercion, Beijing's opportunism, and Moscow's manipulations—each complicating India's already narrow strategic corridor.

What can be the India's best choice? Pragmatism dictates seizing short-term economic relief, even at the cost of dependency. Trade deficits could widen, but the hope would be that economic interdependence tempers political hostility. The risk is obvious: every past thaw with China has eventually collapsed into renewed hostility, leaving India more vulnerable than before.

Then the other option is New Delhi could swallow the humiliation from USA, quietly scale back Russian oil purchases, and bet on tariffs being temporary. This would preserve the long-term partnership, but at the cost of credibility. Strategic autonomy would look more like strategic submission.

The most attractive option is to manoeuvre between poles—leveraging BRICS, the SCO, and the G20 to blunt U.S. pressure while keeping China close enough for cooperation but distant enough to resist domination. This requires delicate balancing and constant recalibration. The challenge is whether such fine balancing can survive the scale of India's economic dependency.

Perhaps the harshest truth is that India's predicament is not solely imposed from outside. It is also the product of domestic failure. Decades of underinvestment in manufacturing, inconsistent industrial policy, and slow progress on self-reliance have left critical sectors hostage to Chinese inputs.

Unless initiatives such as the Production Linked Incentive schemes, semiconductor missions, and pharmaceutical diversification deliver results, New Delhi's claims of strategic autonomy will remain rhetorical. Without industrial resilience, India will remain exposed to external shocks—whether tariffs from Washington or supply chain coercion from Beijing. If India is nudged into China's orbit, it will not be because of American bullying alone. It will also be

because of its own inability to build the economic foundations of independence.

At its core, India's choice between Washington and Beijing may be a false one. Both paths carry peril: the devil of American coercion and the deep sea of Chinese dependency. The challenge is not to choose one over the other but to avoid drowning in either.

DIGITAL WAR OF WORDS

The loss of lives due to a landslide on the route to the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Temple is saddening. My thoughts are with the bereaved families. May the injured recover at the earliest. The administration is assisting all those affected. My prayers for everyone's safety and well-being. ~ Narendra Modi, PM



LIFESTYLE DISEASES: WHY PREVENTION MUST BE OUR PRIORITY



DR. DIMBESWAR DAS

"It is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver." – Mahatma Gandhi

Nearly a century ago, Gandhiji reminded us that the human body is a temple and not a vessel for indulgence. His words remain profoundly relevant today as we grapple with the rising tide of lifestyle-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

Over the last few decades, India has witnessed a dramatic transition in its disease profile. From an era dominated by infectious diseases, maternal and child mortality, we now face an epidemic of chronic, lifestyle-driven illnesses. According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), three of the five leading causes of disease burden in India are now NCDs. In fact, over 60% of all deaths in India are due to NCDs such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, chronic lung conditions, and cancers. Worryingly, these conditions are striking younger populations in India at a faster rate than in many Western nations.

Often called silent killers, diseases like hypertension and diabetes progress quietly

for years without obvious symptoms. Many people discover them only after severe complications such as heart attacks, strokes, or kidney failure, making periodic health check-ups essential for early detection.

The reasons behind this rise in lifestyle diseases are deeply linked to the way we live today. Sedentary habits brought on by fast-paced urban life and technology dependence have reduced physical activity. At the same time, unhealthy diets rich in processed foods, excess sugar, salt, and unhealthy fats are becoming the norm. Tobacco and alcohol use continue to add significant health risks, while rising stress levels and mental health challenges further compound the problem. In addition, pollution and other environmental factors play a growing role in worsening overall health outcomes.

Lifestyle-related NCDs are not limited to diabetes and hypertension alone. A wide spectrum of conditions now affect Indians across age groups, including Dyslipidemia (high cholesterol) and Coronary Heart Diseases, Obesity and Metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD), Alcohol-related liver disease, Certain cancers linked to diet, tobacco, and lifestyle, Mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression, Chronic musculoskeletal pain, and Gastric disorders. These conditions often begin silently in early life and, if neglected, progress to

serious complications and untimely deaths.

Urban and rural India now show narrowing differences in health outcomes, as lifestyle diseases spread across demographics. Increased life expectancy, industrialisation, and affluence are further fuelling the burden. For families, the challenge is not only medical but also financial and emotional, as advanced treatment costs for NCDs can be overwhelming without health insurance or savings.

The most important message about lifestyle diseases is this: they are largely preventable. Small, consistent steps can go a long way in reducing risk. A balanced diet rich in fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins, with moderation in oil, salt, and sugar, is essential. Regular physical activity, such as brisk walking, cycling, or yoga for at least 30 minutes on most days, helps maintain overall fitness. Equally important is learning to manage stress through practices like yoga, meditation, or other relaxation techniques. Avoiding tobacco, limiting alcohol consumption, and undergoing routine screenings for silent conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, or dyslipidemia are critical in preventing complications and ensuring long-term health.

Health education should begin at home and school. Parents and teachers play a pivotal role in shaping healthy habits. Peer influence also affects lifestyle choices, making vigilance and guidance essential during adolescence. Early

interventions can prevent lifelong struggles with lifestyle diseases. Individual action alone is not enough. We need supportive environments and policies that make healthy choices easier. Government programs, such as the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases, Cancer, and Stroke (NPCDCS), focus on prevention and early detection. The World Health Organization has set global targets to reduce premature deaths from NCDs by 25 percent by 2025. But real impact requires more than policy documents—it demands sincere, coordinated efforts across multiple sectors, from government to workplaces to communities.

The fight against NCDs must be collective. Lifestyle diseases are not inevitable. By embracing healthier habits, educating our children, supporting community health initiatives, and strengthening public health systems, we can reverse this alarming trend.

Prevention is not merely a personal choice—it is a responsibility towards ourselves, our families, and the generations to come. Health, indeed, is the truest wealth we can ever possess.

The author is a Senior Consultant - Internal Medicine & Diabetologist at Peerless Hospital Guwahati. He can be reached at 9099781163.

(Dr. Dimbeswar Das, Senior Consultant - Internal Medicine & Diabetologist, Peerless Hospital Guwahati)

Child suicides spike in Manipur as state policy remains in limbo

IMPHAL

The Manipur Commission for Protection of Child Rights has raised alarm over three child suicide cases reported within just two months in Bishnupur district, calling for immediate government action on a long-delayed state child policy.

Keisam Pradipkumar, chairperson of MCPCR, highlighted the urgent need for intervention as children from marginalised communities, including internally displaced persons, face mounting mental health challenges. The commission cited COVID-19 impacts, ethnic conflict, and economic hardship as key factors pushing vulnerable children toward crisis.

Among the recent tragedies,



a 13-year-old IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) boy was found dead at a school boarding facility in Saiton Village this July. In early August, a 15-year-old boy was discovered hanging at his home

in Moirang Khoiru Makha Leikai. Later that month, a Class IX girl in Thamnokpi took her own life, with cyberbullying suspected as a contributing factor.

"The absence of a statutory policy leaves children—especially IDPs, marginalised groups, and those affected by COVID-19, ethnic conflict, and economic hardship—highly vulnerable to serious mental health risks," the commission stated in its notice dated August 26.

The Draft Manipur State Policy for Children, first circulated for public consultation in 2020 and revised in March 2025, continues to await government notification. This delay has left the state without comprehensive frameworks to address rising child welfare concerns.

MCPCR has outlined immediate action points for various departments. The Cyber Crime Police must strengthen their capacity to prevent online exploitation and bullying, while the Education Department should integrate cyber safety and life skills programs in schools. Medical institutions RIMS and JNIMS are urged to provide evidence-based psychosocial support through their psychiatry departments.

The commission emphasised that "recent serial suicides underscore a disturbing trend requiring urgent, coordinated action" and called upon all stakeholders to address root causes of distress while adopting comprehensive preventive measures.

Manipur launches first-ever online water billing portal

IMPHAL

The Public Health & Engineering Department (PHED), Manipur, launched its first-ever online billing portal for water tariff payments on August 26, covering Imphal Municipal Corporation (IMC) areas and Greater Imphal.

The launch took place at the PHED Main Office, Khoiyathong, Imphal West. The portal is accessible at <https://bills.phedmanipur.com>.

The new platform allows registered consumers and households with water meters to pay bills online. Since its trial run in January 2025, with 50,498 water meters installed, the department has generated over Rs 91 lakh in revenue.

The portal aims to provide accurate and transparent billing with 24x7 access to past bill history and payments. It also offers multiple digital payment options, instant alerts for new bills and due dates, water conservation information, and a quick grievance redressal mechanism.

The system will reduce manpower requirements for bill preparation and distribution, and a new tariff structure based on household water consumption will be introduced soon. New connections can also be applied for online, with the helpline number 080-4567-4629 available for assistance.

Addressing the launch, PHED Secretary Hungyo Worshang (IAS) said the initial focus would be on IMC and Greater Imphal areas and urged residents to contact the Water Supply Maintenance Divisions for new water meter installations—Division I at Khoiyathong for Imphal West and Division II at Porompat for Imphal East. Chief Engineer Shangeiphao Vashum, Superintendent Engineer (Urban) Thokchom Bebhina Devi, and other officials were present during the launch event.

Gauhati High Court CJ lauds Nagaland's customary justice system

GUWAHATI

Chief Justice Ashutosh Kumar of the Gauhati High Court lauded Nagaland's customary village justice system, highlighting its focus on reconciliation and healing, in contrast to the formal judiciary's emphasis on declaring right and wrong.

Speaking at a reception organised by the High Court Bar Association Nagaland during his maiden visit to the Kohima Bench, Justice Kumar called the state's traditional dispute resolution practices a unique strength, while emphasizing the need to remain aligned with constitutional provisions. "Your system believes in reconciliation, which is the essence of justice, not merely pronouncing one side right and the other wrong," he observed.

The Chief Justice also stressed the crucial role of the Bar in strengthening the judiciary, urging lawyers in Nagaland to uphold integrity, mentor young advocates, and guide the legal system. He assured the Kohima Bar

that he would visit the state regularly to address its concerns and ensure the Bench received due attention.

During the programme, the HCBA Nagaland submitted a representation highlighting the state's minimal representation in the Gauhati High Court, noting that out of 24 sanctioned judges, only one, Justice Yarenjungla Longkumer, represents Nagaland.

They also emphasized the need for more senior advocate designations to foster professional growth and mentoring.

Justice Kumar inspected the under-construction Kohima High Court complex, approximately 95% structurally complete, suggesting certain modifications to keep the project financially viable while prioritizing essentials for early operationalisation. "Nothing that has been built will be demolished, but modifications may be made to make it functional within available resources," he clarified.

KOHIMA

NSDMA forecasts thunderstorms and heavy rain across Nagaland from August 27 to 30. Several districts face risk of waterlogging and flash floods during the monsoon. Residents advised to secure valuables and avoid floodwaters for safety.

The Nagaland State Disaster Management Authority (NSDMA) has issued a weather advisory for the state from August 27 to 30, warning of thunderstorms, lightning, and moderate to heavy rainfall in several districts.

According to the NSDMA, districts including Kohima, Longleng, Mokokchung, Mon, Peren, Phek, Shamator, Tseminyu, Tuensang, and Wokha will experience moderate intermittent rain-



fall on August 30, while lowland and foothill districts such as Dimapur, Nuland, Chumoukedima, Bhandari, Baghty, Tizit, and Tuli re-

main vulnerable to waterlogging and flash floods.

Authorities have advised residents to take precautionary measures to safeguard

life and property. Key recommendations include keeping valuables in safe lockers, evacuating low-lying areas if instructed, avoiding contact with floodwater, disconnecting electrical appliances, and ensuring drinking water is boiled or treated.

The NSDMA has also urged all District Disaster Management Authorities and line departments to remain on high alert during the monsoon period. Residents facing emergencies are advised to contact the State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC) at toll-free number 1070.

Dr. Johnny Ruangmei, Joint Chief Executive Officer of NSDMA, emphasized the importance of public vigilance and timely action to minimize risk during the forecast period.

Nagaland to experience thunderstorms, heavy rain; authorities issue safety advisory

Shillong Medical College session set for Oct 2025; 72 of 107 cabinet retreat action plans still in progress

SHILLONG

The Meghalaya government, on August 26, convened its second Cabinet Retreat in Shillong, reaffirming its commitment to collaborative governance, citizen welfare, and strategic development. The event, chaired by Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma, brought together Cabinet ministers, senior officials, and grassroots implementers to review progress and chart the State's roadmap for the future.

Addressing the gathering, Sangma said that unlike routine meetings, the retreat provided space for meaningful exchanges among political leaders, bureaucrats, and field-level functionaries. He noted that Meghalaya may be the only state in the country to hold such a programme, bringing together all levels of governance in one forum. The Chief Minister highlighted the importance of aligning departmental goals with the overall

vision of the State, ensuring last-mile delivery of government initiatives, and strengthening interdepartmental coordination. He also underscored the need for investment in youth through employment, sports, and education, stressing that infrastructure must be developed to meet the needs of the next generation. Reviewing the outcomes of the first Cabinet Retreat held in Sohra, officials reported that out of 107 action plans, 27 have been completed, 72 are in progress, and the rest will be reviewed in the coming months. The Planning, Investment Promotion and Sustainable Development Department presented the Action Taken Report and reiterated the need for collective ownership of the State's vision.

The retreat also spotlighted Meghalaya's digital transformation, with over 7,000 users on the Meghalaya One portal and issue-tracking dashboards integrated with CM Connect

and DC Connect. Village Data Volunteers (VDVs) have been roped in to streamline grievance redressal and improve service delivery.

Chief Secretary Donald P. Wahlang described the retreat as a unique forum where the Chief Minister, ministers, senior officials, and Block Development Officers sat together to deliberate on governance. During technical sessions, departments presented progress on key priorities including healthcare reforms, social welfare, sustainable development goals, financial management, talent acquisition, citizen service delivery, connectivity, housing, and digital infrastructure. The chief minister, along with Cabinet colleagues, also launched the Human Development Leadership Programme (HDLF) Joint Field Visit Guide. The programme will see block-level teams from multiple departments conducting week-

ly field visits to address local needs in a coordinated manner. Sangma further informed that the academic session of Shillong Medical College is targeted to begin in October 2025, pending approval from the National Medical Commission (NMC). He also reiterated the government's focus on play-based pedagogy in early grades and enhanced youth-centric initiatives like CM Elevate and PRIME.

Cabinet Ministers present at the retreat included Deputy Chief Minister Shiwabhalang Dhar, Power Minister A.T. Mondal, Health Minister Dr. Ampareen Lyngdoh, Tourism and Social Welfare Minister Paul Lyngdoh, Animal Husbandry Minister A.L. Hek, Sports Minister Shakliar Warjiri, Food and Civil Supplies Minister Comingone Ymbon, and Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Kyrmen Shylla.

IIM Shillong partners with mutual funds body to tackle Meghalaya's financial literacy gap

SHILLONG

The Indian Institute of Management Shillong has entered into a strategic partnership with the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) to address financial literacy challenges across Meghalaya, marking a significant step toward economic empowerment in the northeastern state. The memorandum of understanding establishes a comprehensive programme that will initially launch in Shillong before expanding to all 12 districts of Meghalaya. Students from IIM Shillong will undergo specialised training through a two-tier certification system, beginning with the SEBI Investor Certification (Level I) and progressing to the NISM V-A Certification (Level II). Unlike traditional internship programmes, this initiative focuses on long-term capacity building, with students actively participating in sustained financial awareness campaigns throughout their academic journey. The approach aims to create a network of certified trainers who can continue promoting financial literacy beyond their graduation.

Prof Naliniprava Tripathy, Director (I/c) of IIM Shillong, emphasised that the collaboration would produce certified ambassadors ca-

pable of driving lasting change in financial awareness across the state. She noted that integrating AMFI certifications into the curriculum would enhance both student learning and community impact. The partnership positions IIM Shillong among the first academic institutions nationwide to formally collaborate with AMFI on such an extensive scale. The initiative aligns with the broader Viksit Bharat vision, targeting improved financial inclusion and literacy in regions where such programs have traditionally had limited reach. The program addresses a critical need in Meghalaya, where access to formal financial services and investment knowledge remains limited compared to metropolitan areas. Through this collaboration, students will gain practical experience in financial education while contributing to their state's economic development.

Training will be provided at no cost to participating students, removing financial barriers that might otherwise prevent access to professional certification programs. The structured approach ensures participants receive recognised credentials that enhance their career prospects while serving their communities.

From Ramp to Reel: Lukanand Kshetrimayum to Debut in Historical Drama Birangana Xaadhani

GUWAHATI

Lukanand Kshetrimayum—widely recognized as Mister International India 2019 and Mister International 2022 titleholder—is set to make his acting debut in the upcoming historical feature film Birangana Xaadhani. National Award-winning filmmaker Shri Biswajeet Bora, a distinguished name in both Assamese and Hindi cinema, directs the film.

Produced by the Sootiya Development Council under a cultural initiative by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam, Shri Himanta Biswa Sarma, the film is one of the most ambitious projects ever undertaken in Northeast India in terms of scale and production. Scheduled for release later this year in Hindi, Assamese, Telugu, and other languages, the film aims to achieve a strong pan-India reach.

Lukanand portrays Maharaja Nitipal, the last king of the historic Sootiya dynasty—a simple villager who rose to become king and husband to Queen Sati Sadhani. To prepare for the role, he underwent intensive acting and action workshops for four years, training



under alumni from the National School of Drama.

Speaking about the film, Lukanand shared, "Portraying Maharaja Nitipal connects me deeply to Assam's rich heritage. As a non-Assamese speaker, I have poured my soul into this movie

over the last four years. It is not just a role—it is a responsibility. To step into the shoes of a historical figure from Assam and bring his story alive on screen is profoundly humbling. I thank the director, Shri Biswajeet Bora, for entrusting me with this character."

He further added, "As someone who has represented the region on international platforms, I feel an even greater sense of duty to ensure our history is told with authenticity and respect. This film gives me the opportunity to present a piece of Assam's legacy to national and global audiences—something I consider both an honour and a calling. I hope Birangana Xaadhani sparks renewed interest in our cultural narratives and reminds people around the world of the richness of Northeast India's past."

Lukanand first came into the limelight after winning the title of Mega Mister North East in 2019. This platform became a launchpad for his national and international journey. That same year, he was crowned Mister International India. Representing India at the Mister International 2022 pageant in the Philippines, he initially secured the first runner-up title but was later officially awarded the prestigious Mister International 2022 crown by the Mister International Organization, stepping up as the winner a few months after the finale.

Beyond pageantry, Lukanand has

long been engaged in creative storytelling. A filmmaker since childhood, he has written and directed several Manipuri films and teleplays. His film Nouwa Eikhoibu (2015) received critical acclaim, and his later work Meitan Araba (2019) went on to win Best Feature Film and Best Direction at the Manipur State Film Awards, at the young age of 16, showcasing his early promise as a filmmaker with a strong narrative voice.

In 2024, at just 22 years old, Lukanand was appointed Managing Director of the Mister International Organization, becoming one of the youngest individuals to lead an international pageant platform. His appointment was seen as a reflection of his commitment to empowering a global brand and promoting inclusive representation in global forums.

Throughout his journey, Lukanand has used his platform to advocate for work culture among youth, mental health awareness, and youth leadership. Known for his articulate communication and grounded presence, he continues to be a voice for constructive change, using his influence to spark meaningful conversations beyond glamour.

Currently 90% complete, Birangana Xaadhani is poised to hit theatres across India by the end of the year, bringing an untold chapter of Assam's history to national attention.

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From short-duration conflicts to five-year war, Armed forces must be prepared: Rajnath Singh



NEW DELHI

India's armed forces must be prepared for all kinds of security challenges, from short-duration conflicts to even a five-year war, in view of an unpredictable geopolitical environment, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Wednesday.

In an address at the 'Ran Samvad' conclave here, Singh also said the sheer number of soldiers or the size of weapon stockpiles is no longer enough as cyber warfare, artificial intelligence, drones and satellite-based surveillance are shaping the wars of the future.

Precision-guided weapons, real-time intelligence and data-driven information have now become the cornerstone of success in any conflict, Singh said on the final day of the conclave at the Army War College. Delving into national security challenges, Singh said India does not want anyone's land, but it is ready to go to any extent to protect its territorial integrity.

"In today's era, wars have become so sudden and unpredictable that it is very difficult to predict when any war will end and how long it will last," he said, noting that the Indian military must be prepared for every situation.

"That is, if any war stretches for two months, four months, a year, two years, even five years, then we should be fully prepared for it," he said in the presence of India's top military brass including Chief of Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan, Air Chief Marshal A P Singh and Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi.

The defence minister said modern battles are no longer confined to land, sea and air, and they now extend into outer space and cyberspace.

"Satellite systems, anti-satellite weapons and space command centres are the new instruments of power. Therefore, what we require today is not just defensive preparedness but also a proactive strategy," he said.

Elaborating on rapid changes in the military domain, the defence minister said the present era will be defined by non-linear warfare.

"The sheer number of soldiers or the size of weapon stockpiles is no longer enough. Cyber warfare, artificial intelligence, unmanned aerial vehicles and satellite-based surveillance are shaping the wars of the future," he said.

"In the times ahead, the nation that masters the trian-

gle of technology, strategy and adaptability will emerge as the true global power. To put it simply, this is the moment to learn from history and write a new one; this is the moment to anticipate the future and shape one," he said.

Singh argued that future wars will not merely be battles of weapons and they will be a combined play of technology, intelligence, economy and diplomacy.

He also noted that national security is no longer a matter of the military, but has become an issue of a "whole-of-nation approach".

"We do not want anyone's land, but we are ready to go to any extent to protect our land," he said.

The defence minister lauded the three services for Operation Sindoor and said it has emerged as a great example demonstrating the success of India's indigenous platforms, equipment and weapon systems.

"Its achievements have once again underlined that in the times to come, self-reliance is an absolute necessity. We have indeed made significant progress on the path of self-reliance, but there is still a long way ahead," he said. Singh said the success of Operation Sindoor is a "perfect example" of bravery and swiftness with which the armed forces acted against the terrorists in Pakistan. It was something those terrorists could never have even imagined, he said.

"If we speak of Operation Sindoor, it was indeed a striking demonstration of technology-driven warfare," Singh said.

NEW DELHI

India is bracing for a sharp blow to its overseas trade as steep US tariffs take effect on a range of Indian products on Wednesday — a move that threatens over half of India's exports to its largest market and highlights the fragile trade ties between the two countries.

US President Donald Trump had initially announced a 25% tariff on Indian goods. But earlier this month he signed an executive order imposing an additional 25% tariff due to India's purchases of Russian oil, bringing the combined tariffs imposed by the United States on its ally to 50%.

The Indian government estimates the tariffs will impact \$48.2 billion worth of exports. Officials have warned the new duties could make shipments to the US commercially unviable, triggering job losses and slower economic growth.

India-US trade relations have expanded in recent years but remain vulnerable to disputes over market access and domestic political pressures. India is one of the fastest-growing among major global economies and it may face a slowdown as a result.

A worker inspects high ankle leather boots before packing in a leather footwear manufacturing unit at Dawar industry in Agra, India, Monday, Aug. 25, 2025.

Estimates by New Delhi-based think tank, Global Trade Research Initiative, suggest labor-intensive sectors such as textiles, gems and jewelry, leather goods, food and automobiles will be hit hardest.

"The new tariff regime is a strategic shock that threatens to wipe out India's long-established presence in the US, causing unemployment in export-driven hubs and weakening its role in the industrial value chain," said Ajay Srivastava, the think tank's founder and a former Indian trade official.

The US has for now exempted some sectors such as pharmaceuticals and electronic goods from additional tariffs, bringing some relief for India as its exposure in these sectors is significant.

Puran Dawar, a leather footwear exporter in northern India's Agra city,



says the industry would take a substantial hit in the near term unless domestic demand strengthens and other overseas markets buy more Indian goods. "This is an absolute shock," said Dawar, whose business with the US has grown in recent years.

Dawar's clients include the major fashion retailer Zara.

Dawar, who is also the regional chairman of the Council for Leather Exports — an export promotion body — said the US should understand that the steep tariffs will hurt its own consumers.

Groups representing exporters warn that new import tariffs could hurt India's small and medium enterprises that are heavily reliant on the American market. "It's a tricky situation. Some product lines will simply become unviable overnight," said Ajay Sahai, director general of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations.

A worker inspects high ankle leather boots before packing in a leather footwear manufacturing unit at Dawar industry in Agra, India, Monday, Aug.

25, 2025.

The tariffs come as the US administration continues to push for greater access to India's agriculture and dairy sectors.

India and the US have held five rounds of negotiations for a bilateral trade agreement, but have yet to reach a deal.

That's largely because New Delhi has resisted opening these sectors to cheaper American imports, citing concerns that would endanger jobs of millions of Indians who rely on them for their livelihoods.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has vowed not to yield to the pressure.

"For me, the interests of farmers, small businesses and dairy are topmost. My government will ensure they aren't impacted," Modi said at a rally this week in his home state of Gujarat. He said the world was witnessing a "politics of economic selfishness."

A US delegation cancelled plans to visit New Delhi this week for a sixth round of trade talks.

A worker inspects high ankle leather boots before packing in a leather footwear manufacturing unit at Dawar industry in Agra, India, Monday, Aug. 25, 2025.

The government has begun working on reforms to boost local consumption and insulate the economy.

It has moved to change the goods and services tax, or consumption tax, to lower costs for insurance, cars and appliances ahead of the major Hindu festival of Diwali in October.

The government council is to meet early next month to decide on cutting taxes. The trade ministry and finance ministry are discussing financial incentives that would include favorable bank loan rates for exporters.

The trade ministry also is weighing steps to expand exports to other regions, particularly Latin America, Africa and Southeast Asia.

Trade negotiations underway with the European Union could gain renewed urgency as India works to reduce its dependence on the US market.

INTERNATIONAL

Trump cites threat of tariffs 'so high' to India, Pakistan to broker peace as 50% US levies take effect

WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday once again claimed he helped avert a potential nuclear clash between India and Pakistan in May.

Addressing a cabinet meeting at the White House, Trump said he had spoken with a "very terrific" Prime Minister Narendra Modi and warned New Delhi and Islamabad that continued hostilities would trigger tariffs "so high" and jeopardise trade deals.

Trump's latest comments come as his administration's 50% tariffs on Indian imports — an initial 25% duty and an additional 25% "penalty" over New Delhi's energy ties with Russia — take effect today. India has termed the move as "unjustified and unreasonable".

"I'm talking to a very terrific man, Modi of India. I said, what's going on with you and Pakistan? Then I spoke to Pakistan about trade. I said, what's going on with you and India? This has been going on for a hell of a long time, sometimes under different names for hundreds of years," the US President said during the cabinet meeting.

"But I said, what's going on?... I said, no, no, I don't want to make a trade deal with you. You're going to have a nuclear war. You guys are going to end up in a nuclear war. And that was very important to them. I said, call me back tomorrow, but we're not going to do any deals with you, or we're going to put tariffs on you that are so high. I don't give a damn. Your head's going to spin. You're not going to end up in a war," he added.

"Within about five hours, it was done. It was done. Now maybe it starts again, I don't know, I don't think so. But I'll stop it if it does. We can't let these things happen," Trump said.



US President Donald Trump speaks during a cabinet meeting, Tuesday, Aug. 26, 2025, at the White House in Washington.

Trump also repeated his claim that seven fighter jets or more were shot down during the hostilities, saying, "I saw they were fighting, then I saw seven jets were shot down. I said, 'That's not good.' That's a lot of jets. You know, USD 150 million planes were shot down. A lot of them. Seven, maybe more than that. They didn't even report the real number."

The US President had earlier put the number at five and said he used trade pressure to halt the escalation.

"I have stopped all of these wars. A big one would have been India and Pakistan..." he said during a bilateral meeting with the President of the Republic of Korea on Monday (US local

time).

He added, "The war with India and Pakistan was the next level that was going to be a nuclear war... They already shot down 7 jets - that was raging. I said, 'You want to trade? We are not doing any trade or anything with you if you keep fighting, you've got 24 hours to settle it.' They said, 'Well, there's no more war going on.' I used that on numerous occasions. I used trade and whatever I had to use..."

Trump has referred to the India-Pakistan conflict several times before. In July, he made a similar claim, saying India and Pakistan were close to a nuclear conflict after the Pahalgam terror attack that left 26 people dead and that he intervened at a crucial time to de-escalate.

"We have stopped wars between India and Pakistan. They were probably going to end up in a nuclear war. They

shot down five planes in the last attack. It was back and forth, back and forth. I called them and I said no more trade if you do this. They are both powerful nuclear nations. Who knows where that would have ended up, and I stopped it..." Trump said.

His remarks came a day after the White House credited his intervention with helping secure a "ceasefire" between India and Pakistan following Operation Sindoor, which targeted terror camps in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied Jammu and Kashmir on May 7.

India has consistently denied any third-party involvement in the de-escalation asserting that it was Pakistan's Director General of Military Operations who reached out to his Indian counterpart on May 10, leading to a ceasefire agreed upon directly between the two sides.

UN nuclear watchdog chief says inspectors 'back in Iran'



WASHINGTON

The head of the UN's nuclear watchdog has said a team of its inspectors are "back in Iran," the first to enter since Israeli and US strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities this year.

Iran suspended cooperation with the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency following a 12-day war with Israel in June, with Tehran pointing to the IAEA's failure to condemn Israeli and US strikes on its nuclear facilities.

"Now the first team of IAEA inspectors is back in Iran, and we are about to restart," director general Rafael Grossi told Fox News' "The Story" in an interview aired on Tuesday.

"When it comes to Iran, as you know, there are many facilities. Some were attacked,

some were not," Grossi said. "So we are discussing what kind of... practical modalities can be implemented in order to facilitate the restart of our work there."

The announcement came as Iran held talks with Britain, France and Germany in Geneva on Tuesday, with Tehran seeking to avert a sanctions snapback which the European powers have threatened to impose under a moribund 2015 nuclear deal.

Iran's deputy foreign minister Kazem Gharibabadi, who attended the talks, said it was "high time" for the European trio "to make the right choice and give diplomacy time and space."

Britain, France and Germany — parties to the 2015 deal — have threatened to trigger the accord's "snapback mechanism" by the end of

August.

Tuesday's meeting was the second round of talks with European diplomats since the end of the June war, which was triggered by an unprecedented Israeli surprise attack.

The conflict derailed Iran's nuclear negotiations with the United States.

It also cast a chill on Iran's ties with the IAEA, with Tehran blaming the UN agency in part for the attacks on its nuclear facilities.

Israel says it launched the attacks to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon — an ambition Tehran has repeatedly denied.

The 2015 nuclear deal was torpedoed in 2018 when Donald Trump, during his first term as president, unilaterally withdrew the United States and slapped sanctions on Iran.

1925-2025: Assam's Demographic Crossroads and the Path to an Inclusive Future



For the past hundred years, Assam has been a land of crossroads-geographical, cultural, and now demographic. Situated at the heart of India's Northeast, the state has been defined by its rivers and valleys, its tea gardens and forests, and above all by its people. In 1901, the census recorded Assam's population at just 3.3 million. By 2024, that number has risen more than eleven-fold to an estimated 36.2 million. Behind these numbers lies a complex story-one shaped by migration, fertility patterns, cultural shifts, and economic change.

As Assam approaches its centenary demographic milestone between 1925 and 2025, it faces a critical question: how can it convert this extraordinary transformation into a foundation for inclusive prosperity?

This article examines Assam's shifting demographic profile over the past century, the socio-political debates it has triggered, and the policy imperatives that must guide the state over the next two decades.

A Century of Growth: Numbers That Tell a Story

Assam's demographic journey cannot be understood without looking at the sheer pace of its growth. From colonial times to the present, the state's population trajectory has consistently exceeded expectations. By 2011, Assam's density stood at 398 persons per square kilometre. In 2024, that figure had climbed to 462-well above the national average. This demographic surge is not just the result of natural growth. Migration has played a defining role. Waves of settlers came from East Bengal during colonial rule, encouraged by the British to cultivate Assam's fertile plains. Partition in 1947 and the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971 triggered further inflows, shaping districts along the Brahmaputra valley and Barak valley in profound ways. Religious demographics, too, reflect this historical evolution. Census data reveals that Muslims formed just 9.22% of Assam's population in 1901. By 2011, that figure had risen to 34.2%. Hindus, who made up 61.5% in 2011, are projected to decline to 53.1% by 2050. Demographers attribute these changes to higher fertility rates among Muslims, alongside historic patterns of migration.

The implications of these shifts extend beyond numbers-they touch the heart of Assamese identity, raising questions about culture, language, land, and political representation.

The Politics of Demography
Few Indian states have seen their demographic profile so deeply entwined with politics as Assam. The rise of migration-related anxieties gave birth to one of the longest-running mass movements in post-independence India-the Assam Agitation (1979-1985). Demands to detect and deport illegal migrants shaped the political discourse for decades, culminating in the Assam Accord of 1985.

Yet, even after the Accord, concerns around identity and representation remain strong. The growth of the Muslim population in districts such as Dhubri, Barpeta, and Goalpara is often cited as evidence of demographic imbalance. Indigenous Assamese communities voice fears of being outnumbered in their own homeland, sparking recurring debates on citizenship, land rights, and cultural preservation.

At the same time, religious

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prosperity that lasts beyond the demographic dividend window.
Migration and Its Continuing Complexities
Migration remains a sensitive but unavoidable part of Assam's demographic puzzle. While cross-border migration from Bangladesh has slowed in recent decades due to tighter controls, internal migration continues to reshape Assam's labour market. Workers from Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal contribute heavily to construction, agriculture, and informal services.
The challenge lies in balancing economic dependence on migrants with the anxieties of local populations. Transparent labour regulations, proper documentation, and fair wages can reduce tensions while ensuring migrant workers contribute productively without displacing local communities.
Environmental Stress in a Growing State
No discussion of Assam's future is complete without acknowledging its environmental fragility. The Brahmaputra and Barak rivers, lifelines of the state, are also sources

polarization has overshadowed the reality that Assam's diversity is not new but deeply historical. The state has always been home to a tapestry of communities-Ahoms, Bodos, tea tribes, Bengalis, Karbis, and many others. The challenge today is to reconcile demographic change with the inclusive ethos that has long defined Assamese identity.

Economic Transformation Amidst Demographic Change

While demographic debates often dominate the headlines, Assam's economic trajectory in recent years provides an equally important perspective. The state's per capita income, though still lower than India's leading states, has grown at one of the fastest rates in the country. Between 2012 and 2022, Assam's economy diversified beyond tea and oil, with emerging contributions from services, small industries, and transport infrastructure.

This growth coincides with the opening of what economists call a "demographic dividend" window. Between 2020 and 2040, Assam will have a rising proportion of its population in the working-age category. If harnessed effectively, this can provide the fuel for rapid economic expansion, higher productivity, and improved living standards.

But the dividend is not automatic. Without jobs, skills, and education, a young population can just as easily become a liability, leading to frustration and instability. The next decade is therefore decisive for Assam's future. The Roadmap for Harnessing the Demographic Dividend

Short-Term Priorities (2025-2027)

In the immediate years ahead, Assam must first ensure its infrastructure keeps pace with population expansion. By 2027, the state's population will cross 40 million. Meeting their needs requires a three-pronged push:

Education: Building schools and colleges in underserved areas, particularly in rural and minority-dominated districts, is vital. Equal access will prevent demographic disparities from hardening into social divides.

Healthcare: With one of the lowest doctor-to-patient ratios in India, Assam urgently needs investment in public health infrastructure. Maternal and child health, in particular, must be prioritized to stabilize fertility rates and improve life expectancy.

Employment: Creating job opportunities in manufacturing, agro-processing, and tourism is essential. Unless millions of new jobs are created by 2030, the demographic dividend risks turning into demographic stress.

Medium-Term Strategies (2027-2032)

The next phase must focus on human capital. Skill development programs tailored to Assam's economy-river transport, agro-tech, renewable energy, and cross-border trade-can equip youth with employable skills. Vocational training and entrepreneurship promotion will ensure that rural and urban youth alike can participate in growth.

Long-Term Vision (2032-2040)

Over the long horizon, Assam must embed sustainability into its development model. Rapid urbanization and agricultural expansion have already eroded forest cover. Human-wildlife conflicts in Kaziranga and other areas highlight the need for integrated conservation policies. Climate change adds another layer of urgency, with rising floods threatening livelihoods along the Brahmaputra.

Only by balancing economic growth with ecological preservation can Assam ensure

prosperity that lasts beyond the demographic dividend window.

Migration and Its Continuing Complexities

Migration remains a sensitive but unavoidable part of Assam's demographic puzzle. While cross-border migration from Bangladesh has slowed in recent decades due to tighter controls, internal migration continues to reshape Assam's labour market. Workers from Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal contribute heavily to construction, agriculture, and informal services.

The challenge lies in balancing economic dependence on migrants with the anxieties of local populations. Transparent labour regulations, proper documentation, and fair wages can reduce tensions while ensuring migrant workers contribute productively without displacing local communities.

Environmental Stress in a Growing State

No discussion of Assam's future is complete without acknowledging its environmental fragility. The Brahmaputra and Barak rivers, lifelines of the state, are also sources

of recurring devastation through floods. With climate change intensifying rainfall variability, flood frequency and severity are projected to rise.

At the same time, population pressure has led to encroachment in forest areas. Between 2001 and 2020, Assam lost thousands of hectares of tree cover, mostly to agriculture and settlements. The loss of wetlands has further reduced the state's resilience to floods.

To safeguard its future, Assam must prioritize climate-resilient infrastructure-raised embankments, flood-resistant housing, and early warning systems. Urban planning must also shift to sustainable models, preventing unplanned sprawl in cities like Guwahati, Silchar, and Dibrugarh.

Social Cohesion: The Fragile Fabric

In a state as diverse as Assam, demographic shifts directly impact social cohesion. Encouragingly, some indicators show progress-inter-community marriages are rising, and urban neighbourhoods are increasingly mixed. Yet, tensions remain visible in rural areas, where land disputes, competition for

government jobs, and cultural anxieties often spark conflict.

One recurring concern is the fear among Assamese-speaking populations of linguistic marginalization. With Bengali, Hindi, and tribal languages also widely spoken, linguistic identity remains a cornerstone of political mobilization. Policies promoting multilingual education while protecting Assamese as the state language can help preserve balance.

The growth of the Muslim population, meanwhile, must be managed with sensitivity. Demonization risks deepening divides. Instead, policies should focus on ensuring equal access to education and employment, thereby integrating communities into a shared vision of progress.

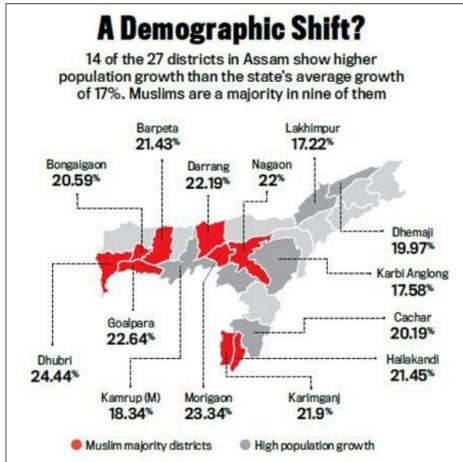
Policy Recommendations: Charting the Way Forward

To navigate its demographic crossroads, Assam needs a comprehensive, inclusive roadmap. Key measures include:
1. Creation of a Demographic Transformation Commission: A state-level body to oversee population trends, monitor fertility rates, and guide policies on education, employment, and healthcare.
2. District-Level Monitoring Committees: Localized approaches to track demographic indicators, migration patterns, and resource distribution in high-growth districts.
3. Human Capital Investment: Substantial allocations towards skill development, vocational training, and health services, especially for marginalized communities.
4. Environmental Safeguards: Integrated river basin management, forest conservation, and promotion of renewable energy.
5. Dialogue Platforms for Social Cohesion: Community-based forums to resolve disputes, promote cultural exchange, and prevent polarization.
6. Collaborative Funding Models: Mobilizing resources from state and central governments, international partners, and private investors to finance Assam's transformation.

A Defining Moment

As Assam stands at the threshold of its demographic century, the choices made in the next two decades will determine whether it becomes a model of inclusive prosperity or a case study in missed opportunities. The demographic dividend window is narrow but potent. Harnessed effectively, it can lift millions out of poverty, preserve cultural heritage, and position Assam as a leader in India's Northeast. But success requires more than economics. It requires trust between communities, sensitivity in governance, and a willingness to view diversity not as a threat but as a strength. If Assam can balance its competing narratives-demographic change and cultural preservation, economic growth and environmental sustainability, identity and inclusion-it will not just secure a prosperous future for its people but also offer lessons to the rest of India.

The crossroads is here. The path forward must be chosen with wisdom, courage, and vision.



A Demographic Shift?
14 of the 27 districts in Assam show higher population growth than the state's average growth of 17%. Muslims are a majority in nine of them

of recurring devastation through floods. With climate change intensifying rainfall variability, flood frequency and severity are projected to rise.

At the same time, population pressure has led to encroachment in forest areas. Between 2001 and 2020, Assam lost thousands of hectares of tree cover, mostly to agriculture and settlements. The loss of wetlands has further reduced the state's resilience to floods.

To safeguard its future, Assam must prioritize climate-resilient infrastructure-raised embankments, flood-resistant housing, and early warning systems. Urban planning must also shift to sustainable models, preventing unplanned sprawl in cities like Guwahati, Silchar, and Dibrugarh.

Social Cohesion: The Fragile Fabric

In a state as diverse as Assam, demographic shifts directly impact social cohesion. Encouragingly, some indicators show progress-inter-community marriages are rising, and urban neighbourhoods are increasingly mixed. Yet, tensions remain visible in rural areas, where land disputes, competition for

government jobs, and cultural anxieties often spark conflict.

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